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Viewing cable **06MANAGUA2492**, ONCE UPON A NICARAGUAN ELECTION: TALES OF A U.S.

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06MANAGUA2492**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06MANAGUA2492	2006-11-09 22:50	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758468.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758464.aspx>
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-lquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2758753.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4041/millones-de-dolares-sin-control-y-a-disolucion>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4040/la-lquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-venezuela-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4047/rodrigo-barreto-enviado-de-lquo-vacaciones-rdquo>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2746658.aspx>
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<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2746673.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-lquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 002492

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/09/2016

TAGS: PGOV KDEM SOCI NU

SUBJECT: ONCE UPON A NICARAGUAN ELECTION: TALES OF A U.S.
OBSERVER MISSION

REF: A. MANAGUA 2466

1B. MANAGUA 2459
1C. MANAGUA 2484

Classified By: Ambassador Paul Trivelli for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (U) SUMMARY: The U.S. Embassy community contributed 46 observers to the international force on November 5th. Traveling to each of Nicaragua's 17 departments, observer teams left by plane and automobile early on Saturday the 4th. Their collective experiences paint a colorful picture of Nicaragua's 2006 presidential and legislative election which brought Daniel Ortega to power after three previous unsuccessful attempts. A collection of their stories from observing in the barrios of Managua to the mountains of Chontales follows. Some highlight electoral anomalies tracked by trends in Ref C; others are touching stories of democracy in action. END SUMMARY

INTENTION OF THE VOTER

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12. (SBU) The widespread control and ability of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) to mobilize its supporters to action was strongly represented in the experience of one observer in the department of Rio San Juan, one of Nicaragua's southern departments. During the closure process and vote tabulation, the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) president of the voting table (JRV) who was a Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC) representative, attempted to annul votes cast for the FSLN with the excuse that the mark had been made outside of the circle but inside the party box. According to Nicaraguan electoral regulations, however, these votes should have been valid. The fiscal argued with her, to which she responded that she would not be intimidated.

13. (SBU) The FSLN fiscal spoke to someone outside the window and within 15 minutes there was a fairly large crowd of FSLN supporters standing outside the JRV shouting, "intention of the voter!" They continued their chanting until the president conceded that indeed, the ballots were valid and would count. In a rural JRV in Chontales, a voter had written the word "mentiroso" (liar) in the circle below Daniel Ortega. The FSLN fiscal insisted that the vote was valid, and the CSE officials agreed.

MARRIAGE PROPOSALS AND COUNTRY HOMES

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14. (C) Pol Intern observed in a semi-rural JRV in the region of Chontales, a mountainous region known for its meat and dairy industry, and once high Contra presence. According to most reports, Chontales was a particularly tranquil region

during the election, with an expected number of anomalies. This trend was confirmed by Pol Intern who observed in the towns of Juigalpa and the rural Santo Thomas. In the JRV where she spent the majority of her time, she was greeted by a friendly and amicable FSLN fiscal who found time as he was overseeing the voting process to offer her a place in his country home in the mountains of Chontales. "I'm single," he assured her from under the brim of his U.S.A. baseball cap. She was also lucky enough to receive a marriage proposal from the electoral police on guard, enthusiastic about the prospect of acquiring American citizenship.

¶ 15. (SBU) Also in Chontales, the observer team visited the campaign headquarters for each of the five parties. At each they were greeted amicably. At the PLC headquarters they observed the slogan "Arnoldo, the liberals are with you" painted profusely on the walls of the small office, referring to former president Arnoldo Aleman. Onlookers cautioned the team that if they visited the FSLN headquarters they would find them distributing cedulas. Once there, they didn't find cedulas, only paintings of "Che" Guevara. The team was filmed by party functionaries as they were leaving the headquarters.

MAKING YOUR VOTE COUNT

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¶ 16. (SBU) For many, last Sunday was an important event, an opportunity to have a say in a process that is relatively new to the Nicaraguan political experience. Many extremely humble citizens took time on Sunday to stand in long lines, some for 5 1/2 hours, endure rain, heat, and confusion in order to cast their ballot. One observer in the northern department of Madriz saw an elderly lady slowly and meticulously cast her ballot and then painstakingly search for the correct deposit boxes. Having succeeded and after her thumb was stained with the black-brown ink, she did a hop-skip and clapped her hands together in celebration.

¶ 17. (C) Less humble Nicaraguans voted as well, including Daniel Ortega, who voted at the same JRV as one FSN who was observing for the civil society group Etica y Transparencia. He arrived with an entourage of press and supporters who strong-armed their way into the JRV to photograph the event. The FSN observed from her position plastered against the wall of the tiny room as Ortega voted with his wife Rosario Murillo. The room was so small that it was possible to see into the voting booths. He left with both thumbs in the air, celebrating. Hours later, Alternative for Change (AC) candidate Eden Pastora voted in the same JRV followed by only two reporters.

CRIMINALS AS ELECTORAL POLICE, IN THE RANKS OF THE CSE

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¶ 18. (C) Observers in the departments of Boaco and Leon reported that the CSE had some difficulty finding JRV officials without criminal records. In Leon, the Municipal Electoral Council (CEM) president confirmed to observers that 100 of the 416 electoral police in his municipality had been replaced at the last minute because they were "found to have police records." The CEM president informed the observer that the Ministry of Government selects, trains, and pays the electoral police, but the CEM can determine where to place them. (Note: Electoral law article 182 explains that the Ministry of Government shall ensure the constitution of the electoral police but that they will function under the orders of the CSE from the beginning of the campaign until the inauguration. Even the instructions issued by the CSE do not clearly indicate which body has the ultimate authority to place and control the police force.)

¶ 19. (C) The experience of an FSN observing in Boaco serves as a clear representation of the FSLN-PLC pact at its most basic level. At the JRV where he observed, the first member of the JRV was challenged because she held a criminal record. She was a representative of the PLC and the president of the JRV belonged to the FSLN. Despite their party differences, the FSLN president defended her. In the end she was allowed to

stay and assume the position of first member.

INTO THE WEE HOURS OF THE NIGHT

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¶10. (U) JRV's were scheduled to close at 6:00 PM and most reported having done so. Nevertheless, the majority of JRV's did not finish the voting tabulation and transport the votes to the computation centers until 11:00. Some closed as late as 4:30 in the morning and CSE officials, fiscales, and observers remained with the ballots until that time. One observer reported seeing an Etica y Transparencia observer sleeping next to a bag of tallies and packaged votes while they waited for the CSE trucks to pick them up. Caravans of CSE officials, fiscales, and observers made their way to the Enitel (phone company) transmission centers and then to the computation centers, often passing through massive celebrations of FSLN supports who had heard the 12:50 announcement that put the FSLN ahead.

¶11. (U) COMMENT: The U.S. observer mission shared in the collective experience of the Nicaraguan people from dawn on Sunday to dawn on Monday and most observers reported having a very positive experience. A nominal level of chaos and inefficiency seems to have been the norm, and certainly there were notable anomalies (Ref C).

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